



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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HOUSE FILES SUIT TO REQUEST REVIEW OF REDISTRICTING PLAN

Speaker Charlie DeWitt and Speaker Pro Tempore Emile "Peppi" Bruneau announced that the Louisiana House of Representatives today filed a suit seeking a declaratory judgment that the 2001 redistricting plan for the House of Representatives does not have the purpose or the effect of denying or abridging a citizen's right to vote on account of their race. This suit was filed in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia and requests the convening of a three judge panel to review the House's redistricting plan (Act 3 of the 2nd Extraordinary Session of 2001).

The Voting Rights Act grants the House of Representatives a choice between two forums for review of its new redistricting plan: the United States District Court for the District of Columbia or the Department of Justice. In the 1980s and 1990s, the House of Representatives sought administrative review of its newly adopted redistricting plans by the Department of Justice. The Department rejected each of those plans, forcing the legislature to consider further redistricting decisions in subsequent sessions to satisfy the department's demands.

Bruneau said, "As the legislative officers of the House of Representatives, Speaker DeWitt and I chose the review forum where the solemn expression of the legislature will receive the most fair and judicious review.

"The best interests of all Louisiana's citizens will be met by having this redistricting plan reviewed in the forum where the explanations of the legislative act and all of the interested parties' positions will take place in an open, public court room."

(more)

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“Administrative review by the Department of Justice is a closed, secret process. The Department of Justice’s published guidelines seem to ignore the decisions of the United States Supreme Court in *Shaw v. Reno* and its progeny. The Department of Justice apparently expects states to maintain districts drawn solely on the basis of race and which were forced upon the states by the department in the 1990s. The U. S. Supreme Court has clearly limited the department’s powers in reviewing state redistricting decisions. It appears that the department does not consider these limitations as affecting the scope of their review of state redistricting decisions. For these reasons, the House of Representatives is seeking judicial review and preclearance of its 2001 redistricting plan.”

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